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DEPT FOR SCA/INS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: WAITING FOR KING'S NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

REF: A. KATHMANDU 958

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 965
[1](#)C. KATHMANDU 928

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (U) On the eighth day of the seven-party alliance nationwide general strike and demonstrations, Nepalis across the country continued to take to the street to participate in pro-democracy protests. Though there was no day-time curfew in Kathmandu on April 13, the government arrested over 200 people here; it released many within hours of taking them into custody. The situation outside of Kathmandu appears to be worsening with protests increasing and the situation becoming more tense. Nepalis are waiting to see if the King reaches out to the political parties in a meaningful way in his Nepali New Year's Day message on April 14. Absent positive steps, Parties vowed to continue their protest actions. Maoists continued to block roads nationwide "in support of the Parties' movement." The government allowed cellular phone service to resume the afternoon of April 13.
End Summary.

What Will The King Say?

[1](#)2. (C) On the last day of the Nepali Year 2062, citizens are looking toward the King's Nepali New Year's message on April 14 to see if the King reaches out to the political parties. The Acting Foreign Secretary told the A/DCM that the King would not deliver the message himself, but would pass out embargoed copies of the written text to radio, TV and news media to release at 0700 local time on April 14. A "wait and see" mood is prevalent in most of the capital.

Parties: Hope for the Best, Expect The Worst

[1](#)3. (C) K.P. Oli, UML Central Committee member, acknowledged that the Parties were waiting to hear the King's New Year's message. He told Emboff that given the King's actions since February 1, 2005, he was "not optimistic" that the King would

reach out in his speech. He noted that the Parties planned to continue the indefinite general strike and protest actions, though he had no specifics on party programs. He warned "if the government keeps repressing the demonstrations then the situation will be grave." He worried that the protesters would become "fed up" with the government and the beatings, and would become attracted to the Maoists. He cautioned that, if protesters joined with the Maoists, the Parties could not control the situation. Likewise, Sushila Koirala, Nepali Congress Central Committee member, predicted to Emboff that there would be no stop in the demonstrations. He was similarly pessimistic that the King would reach out in a "meaningful" way, citing the aggressive government reaction to demonstrations as a sign that the government had no new ideas or initiatives. Koirala defined "meaningful" as reinstatement of parliament, explaining that "letting the parliament decide" was the best way forward for the country. He worried that, if the King did not restore parliament, he did not know how people would react or what would be the future of the country. He cautioned that the situation could soon be "out of the hands of the Parties and the King."

Government Clashes with and Arrests Protesters

¶4. (C) On April 13, Nepalis in cities and towns throughout the country continued pro-democracy protests on the eighth day of the seven-party alliance general strike. Though the government did not issue a day-time curfew in Kathmandu, its ban on demonstrations within the Ring Road remains in effect.

Media reported that the government arrested more than 200 people in Kathmandu on April 13, including 66 lawyers protesting in front of the Nepal Bar Association, and 21 teachers protesting in front of their school. Media reported that police fired bullets and teargas, then charged into the Bar Association demonstration with batons, seriously injuring three people. Elsewhere in Kathmandu, media reported that demonstrators attacked and destroyed a passing taxi. The government invoked day-time curfews in Rupandehi, Nawalparasi, Chitwan, and Parsa Districts, neighboring districts in southwest Nepal that have seen large demonstrations over the past few days (ref A). American Corner staff told Emboff they witnessed large demonstrations in several cities, including 20,000 people in Pokhara (western hills), and 20,000 people near Nepalgunj (far-western terai). Media reported 10,000 people protesting in Khavre District (near Kathmandu) and 5,000 people protesting in Biratnagar (eastern terai). In a positive development on April 13, the government resumed cell-phone service in Kathmandu, cut since April 8. In addition, the government also allowed leaders of the seven-party alliance to address a peaceful crowd at Gongabu, in Kathmandu, site of violent clashes on April 10-11 (ref A).

Maoists Action

¶5. (SBU) The Maoists continue to be a disruptive force and are attempting to take control of the highways. There are media reports of widespread Maoist roadblocks nationwide disturbing the movement of goods and people. The Embassy has fifteen containers in the border town of Birgunj that cannot be transported to Kathmandu because of road closures. The World Food Program issued a statement saying that Maoist road blockades were disrupting the delivery of food supplies to Bhutanese refugee camps in eastern Nepal (ref B). Maoist leaders reportedly requested the release of five Maoist cadre in exchange for the release of the Chief District Officer (CDO) of Sarlahi District (south-east Nepal), whom they kidnapped in their April 6 attack on the District Headquarters of Malangawa (ref C).

Comment

¶6. (C) The lack of curfews in Kathmandu for the past two days, the security forces allowing of a peaceful demonstration in Gongabu on April 13, and the resumption of

cell phone service are all positive changes in HMGN actions.
The most important test, however, will be the King's April 14
address and whether he takes a real, positive step toward
restoring democracy.
MORIARTY